



Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 18 October 2013

ASSISTANCE FOR BUSH FIRE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell said NSW Government agencies are providing a coordinated response to the current bush fire emergency to provide support to those in need.

Mr O'Farrell also offered condolences to the family of a 63-year-old man who has been confirmed as suffering a fatal heart attack while defending his home against bushfires at Lake Munmorah yesterday.

"We were hoping for a miracle but sadly it has now been confirmed there has been a fatality – I send my condolences to the man's family and friends at this difficult time," Mr O'Farrell said.

"Given the hostile conditions we saw yesterday, it's a testament to the professionalism of the members of the Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, National Parks and Wildlife Services, NSW Police and other emergency services agencies in NSW that we have not seen a greater loss of life.

"This morning I have spoken to the Prime Minister and I can assure all affected communities that everything is being done by the State and Federal Governments get urgent help to people needing assistance."

In the first instance, people who have lost their homes in the fire should contact Centrelink and their own insurer.

For those unable to return home, evacuation centres have been set up and staff from the Department of Family and Community Services together with non-government organisations are coordinating emergency housing, clothing, toiletries, blankets, food and counselling.

Evacuation centres

Evacuation centres are staffed by FACS employees and have been set up at the following locations:

Wyong:

- Doyalson RSL - 1 Pacific Highway, Doyalson
- Swansea RSL – 5 Bridge Street, Swansea
- Swansea Workers Club – 9 Rawson Street, Swansea

Lithgow and Blue Mountains:

- Lithgow Workers Club - 3 Tank Street, Lithgow
- Bilpin Community Centre - 2596 Bells Line of Road, Bilpin
- Blackheath Community Centre - Great Wester Highway, Blackheath
- Springwood Sports Centre - 83 Macquarie Road, Springwood

Heatherbrae:

- Tomaree Sports Club, Nelson Bay Road, Nelson Bay
- Wests Mayfield, 32 Industrial Road, Mayfield

Muswellbrook:

- Denman Memorial Hall – Ogilvie Street, Denman

Southern Highlands/Wollondilly:

- Brethren Church - Wonga Road, Picton

In some centres the Salvation Army, Anglicare, Red Cross and the NSW Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network are also present.

To contact FACS please call 1300 HOUSING (**1300 468 746**)

Disaster Relief Grants

Financial assistance is available under the NSW Disaster Relief Scheme for people affected by disaster who are experiencing financial hardship and who are unable to meet the cost of repairs for essential housing contents and/or structural repairs to their homes.

To apply for financial assistance call **1800 018 444**.

School Closures & HSC

The Board of Studies NSW has advised HSC students in bushfire affected areas to contact their school if they are unsure if exams will occur, or if it is unsafe for them to reach an examination venue.

If a student is cut off from their exam centre by a natural disaster, they may attend a neighbouring school on exam day, if it is safe to do so.

Students unable to attend an examination due to a natural disaster are eligible to lodge an Illness/Misadventure appeal to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

Parents and carers should contact their school directly to check on closures – however, most of the closures of government schools are listed online at www.schools.nsw.edu.au.

Donations

The Salvation Army has commenced an *October 2013 Bush Fire Appeal*. To donate, please call **13 72 58** or go online at - <https://salvos.org.au/>.

We are currently advised that the evacuation centres are suitably resourced and do not require blankets and other items.

General Advice

People should continue to monitor their local radio stations and/or go online to the NSW Rural Fire Service website (www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or the State Emergency Services website (www.ses.nsw.gov.au) for the latest information related to current NSW bush fires.

The RFS Bush Fire Information Line is **1800 679 737**.

In all emergencies please call Triple Zero (**000**).

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